

For over one year, that is from the moment when programme Family 500+ was introduced, there have been debates whether this largest since economic transformations in Poland social transfer is a waste of money or rather something that the society rightly deserves? Is this programme truly a good social policy?

In order to say that 23 billion zloty for the programme 500+ is spent in the best possible way, one would have to find its cohesion with the rest of the government's social policies, that is government's support for the family in all forms in the lives of Polish citizens. This cohesion and support are unfortunately, lacking in other areas. It would be very important to structure this programme on three basis: employment market, care institutions and last – financial transfers. Pumping of the 23 billion zloty in one, poorly made instrument, is the greatest weakness of the programme and it is already shown by the data from GUS (Main Office of Statistics) confirming that in the 3rd quarter of last year, the ratio of employment of women aged 25-34 was the lowest since the beginning of 2013. The Institute for Structural Research (IBS) estimated that programme 500+ took 40-55 thousand women out of employment.

This stems from the fact that our job market is rigid. Two thirds of working parents have no choice of their working hours, because this is regulated exclusively by their managers. Poor flexibility of employment in Poland affects not only the level of satisfaction among people, but also procreation. We can see this in the statistics which show that people who have children are willing to take part time employment. If one is able to work few hours from home or part time away from home in order to keep some income and contact with people, it is easier to combine professional and personal life and thus be able to decide whether to have one or more children.

Social flexibility of employment is linked with the institutional structures. While the situation with kinder-

gartens is not too bad, caring for the youngest children is nothing short of a drama. In 2013, there were fewer places at nurseries in Poland than seats at the National Stadium and present government has done little to change this. Still three quarters of boroughs in Poland do not have any form of institutional care for children under 3.

500+ in other words, a wasted opportunity

It is worth mentioning the ethical problem with the pro-family programme, which in fact does not meet the expectations of these groups, who for a variety of reasons, want to, but cannot have children. The most obvious group is one million couples, who unsuccessfully try to have a child. It is difficult to believe in the good will of the legislators and their efforts to improve birth rate, if the same legislators withdrew funding for in vitro spuriously claiming it to be too expensive. Meanwhile, the in vitro programme cost the 277 times less than Family 500+. This tactics shows that the government doesn't really want 'more children' but more families of the certain type. The fact that someone would believe in the financial limits for the programme which costs less per year than one day of Family 500+, shows how little we understand public policy. This is why we could be missing that historically negative relation between procreation, employment and women education became positive in the 90ies. There was a change not only in the factors affecting the size of the family, but also its structure. When the spokeswoman for party PiS, Beata Mazurek said in February 2016 to single parents, that they should stabilise their family situation and

have more children, she probably didn't know that she was addressing 2.17 million single mothers and 328 thousand single fathers i.e. every fifth of the Polish household. In the West Pomeranian voivodship, 41 percent children are born outside marriage. While programme Family 500+ only in small proportion helps single parents, it is so highly regulated, that to for a single parent to qualify, it is close to impossible. On the one hand, there are persons who singlehandedly bring up children and whose income is slightly over the threshold of 800 zloty net per person in the family and therefore do not qualify to benefit from the programme, on the other hand there are people who receive 500 zloty even though this represents less than one percent of their monthly income. These two cases when put together, illustrate a serious problem with the programme. Lots of organisations reported on this and proposed, among other things, an introduction of the principle 'one zloty for one zloty', but nobody took their opinions into consideration and five days after closing of 'public consultations', 500+ programme was at the Sejm. Ideas brought forward in the course of consultations, were not even read, because this would require recalculating of the costs of the whole programme which has never happened.

The countries such as Sweden or Germany have already shown that financial transfers in the highly developed societies, if not followed by other pro-family politics, do not bring about increased birth rate. From this perspective, programme Family 500+ is simply a wasted opportunity. In social politics, there is a lack of cohesion and continuity, this is a recipe for disaster and this is taking place before our very eyes.

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